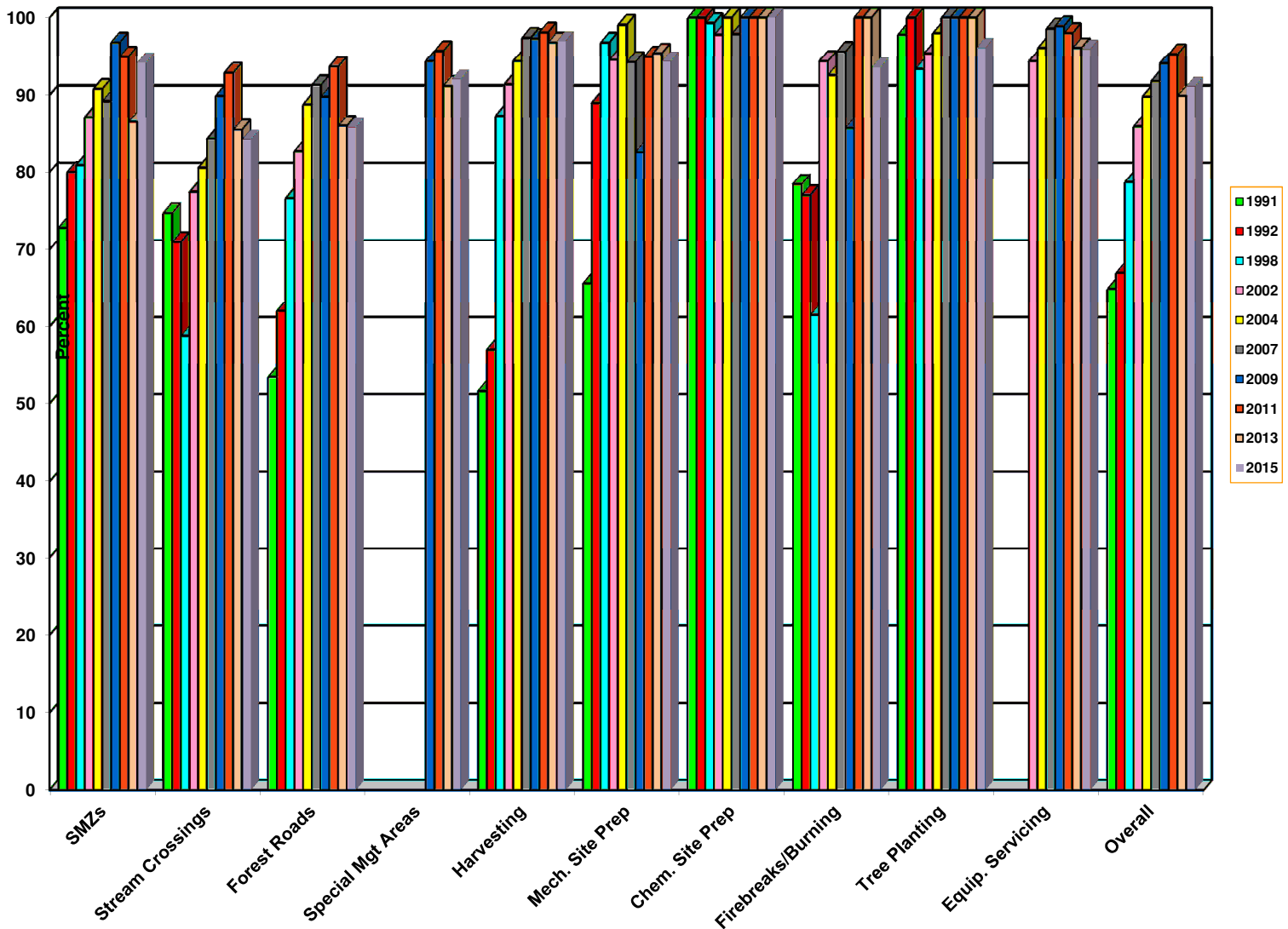


2015 Forestry Best Management Practices Implementation Survey Highlights

General Best Management Practices (BMP) Survey Results

The Georgia Forestry Commission (GFC) has completed its 2015 Forestry BMP Implementation Survey covering 213 randomly selected sites statewide. These 213 sites involve 34,932 acres with 204 miles of forest roads and 113 stream crossings. By ownership, 131 of the sites occurred on non-industrial private forest land (NIPF), 58 sites were on forest industry / corporate land and 24 sites were on public land. The survey also included an additional 152 state firebreak inspection sites. Overall statewide BMP implementation for GFC's 2015 BMP Survey is 91.13 percent. BMP Implementation is simply the percentage of fully implemented BMPs compared to the total number of necessary or applicable BMPs at the tract, practice, and overall levels. This represents an approximate 1.20 percentage point improvement from GFC's 2013 BMP Survey result of 89.93 percent. BMP implementation results were also calculated for each applicable category of practice for each tract. Categories of practice include Streamside Management Zones (SMZs), Stream Crossings, Forest Roads, Special Management Areas, Harvesting (outside SMZs), Mechanical Site Prep, Chemical Site Prep, Firebreaks/Burning, Tree Planting, and Equipment Servicing, as well as an overall category. BMP implementation results for each category are shown in this chart along with the results from the last nine BMP surveys for comparison where available.

BMP Implementation Trends



BMP implementation for 2015, shown in purple in the chart, improved significantly for SMZs from the 2013 survey by 7.7 percentage points, to a score of 94.20 percent in 2015. Improvements were also found in the categories of both Special Management Areas and Harvesting. BMP implementation for 2015 declined slightly in the categories of Stream Crossings, Forest Roads, Mechanical Site Prep, Firebreaks/Burning, Tree Planting, and Equipment Servicing, representing BMP educational opportunities going forward. However, Stream Crossings and Forest Roads represent the areas needing the most attention due to their relatively lower scores.

Educational Opportunities

As we can see from the chart, BMP implementation for stream crossings and forest roads are the two lowest categories. Therefore, our educational opportunities will be focused on those categories. Also we will continue to push for improvements in all categories where possible and for continued good compliance in those categories near or at the top. In particular, educational opportunities in these categories include:

- For Stream Crossings
 - ✓ Culvert crossing design and installation information
 - ✓ Basic stream crossing design needs, including storm flow and aquatic migration requirements
 - ✓ Stream crossing approach design and stabilization
 - ✓ Temporary portable bridge use
- For Forest Roads
 - ✓ Stormwater control structure design and placement
 - ✓ Proper closeout needs following harvest activities
- In addition, for Streamside Management Zones (SMZs)
 - ✓ Continued information on stormwater control structure design needs for roads in SMZs
 - ✓ Continued information on SMZ width and residual forest cover requirements
 - ✓ Continued information on stream classification for proper recognition of stream types
 - ✓ Continued information on logging slash removal and rehab in stream channels and SMZs following harvest
- In addition, for Special Management Areas
 - ✓ Continued information on minimizing soil disturbance
 - ✓ Continued information on avoiding road/firebreak turn-outs tying into ephemeral areas
- In addition, for Harvesting
 - ✓ Continued information on basic timber harvesting BMPs, including log deck and skid trail stabilization
- In addition, for Mechanical Site Prep
 - ✓ Continued information on avoiding bedding that directs runoff into roads or road-ditches
- In addition, for Chemical Site Prep
 - ✓ Continued information on proper application, storage, and clean-up
- In addition, for Firebreaks/Burning
 - ✓ Continued information on proper construction and spacing of water diversions in firebreaks and proper tie-in
- In addition, for Tree Planting
 - ✓ Continued information on planting on the contour for machine planting
- In addition, for Equipment Servicing
 - ✓ Continued information on proper clean-up of containers

Where's the room for improvement, and why the relatively lower numbers for stream crossings and roads?

The results from the survey seem to indicate a continuation of some issues with stream crossings and roads. Scores for those two categories remain around 85%. Those issues are likely intensified by smaller tracts, parcelization, and access needs.

- The 2013 Survey was the first survey carried out since large segments of forest industry lands were fully divested and no longer under corporate management. The 2015 Survey appears to mirror some of the same issues associated with those changes. The divestiture potentially resulted in:
 - ✓ Change of management levels and objectives
 - ✓ "Parcelization" --- tracts broken up into smaller parcels with multiple landowners with a range of knowledge, personal resources, and objectives for ownership
- Smaller properties result in more roads and stream crossings for access for multiple landowners

GFC BMP Survey results show that as tract size decreases, so does the percentage of BMP Implementation. For the 2015 Survey, BMP Implementation for tracts over 200 acres is almost 93 percent; for tracts between 100 and 200 acres, BMP implementation is 92.55 percent; and for tracts less than 100 acres, BMP implementation is 90.41 percent. Also telling is the fact that all the water quality risks (WQRs) found during the 2015 Survey occurred on tracts less than 100 acres.

What's the good news from the 2015 Survey, and why?

The good news includes a small improvement in overall BMP Implementation to 91.13%. This includes a significant improvement of 7.7 percentage points in BMP Implementation for SMZs to 94.2%. Also, there was a good improvement in the total number of WQRs going down 37%. Finally, while there were slight declines in some individual categories, there were improvements in others, and all individual categories except for stream crossings and roads scored above 92% for BMP Implementation, with four of the ten individual categories shown scoring above 95%. In conclusion, the overall trend seems to be on the good side.